


Eliphas Levi

Eliphas Levi	
	
Born	Alphonse Louis Constant 8 February 1810 France
Died	31 May 1875 (aged 65)

Eliphas Levi, born **Alphonse Louis Constant** (February 8, 1810 - May 31, 1875), was a French occult author and ceremonial magician.^[1]

"Eliphas Levi", the name under which he published his books, was his attempt to translate or transliterate his given names "Alphonse Louis" into Hebrew although he was not Jewish.

His second wife was French sculptress Marie-Noémi Cadiot.

Early life

Levi was the son of a shoemaker in Paris; he attended the seminary of Saint Sulpice and began to study to enter the Roman Catholic priesthood. However, while at the seminary he fell in love, and left without being ordained. He wrote a number of minor religious works: *Des Moeurs et des Doctrines du Rationalisme en France* ("Of the Moral Customs and Doctrines of Rationalism in France", 1839) was a tract within the cultural stream of the Counter-Enlightenment. *La Mère de Dieu* ("The Mother of God", 1844) followed and, after leaving the seminary, two radical tracts, *L'Evangile du Peuple* ("The Gospel of the People", 1840), and *Le Testament de la Liberté* ("The Testament of Liberty"), published in the year of revolutions, 1848, led to two brief prison sentences.

Career



In 1853, Levi visited England, where he met the novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who was interested in Rosicrucianism as a literary theme and was the president of a minor Rosicrucian order.^[2] Levi's first treatise on magic appeared in 1855 under the title "*Dogme de la Haute Magie*", followed a year later by the companion "*Rituel de la Haute Magie*". The two books were later combined into one book titled *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, and was translated into English by Arthur Edward Waite as *Transcendental Magic, its Doctrine and Ritual* in 1910. Its famous opening lines present the single essential theme of Occultism and gives some of the flavor of its atmosphere:

Behind the veil of all the hieratic and mystical allegories of ancient doctrines, behind the darkness and strange ordeals of all initiations, under the seal of all sacred writings, in the ruins of Nineveh or Thebes, on the crumbling stones of old temples and on the blackened visage of the Assyrian or Egyptian sphinx, in the monstrous or marvelous paintings which interpret to the faithful of India the inspired pages of the Vedas, in the cryptic emblems of our old books on alchemy, in the

ceremonies practised at reception by all secret societies, there are found indications of a doctrine which is everywhere the same and everywhere carefully concealed.(Introduction)

Although famous, the Introduction was not written until 1861 after the initial success of the first edition.

Levi began to write in succession *Historie de la Magie* in 1860. The following year, in 1861, he published a sequel to *Dogme et Rituel*, *La Clef des Grands Mystères* ("The Key to the Great Mysteries"). Further magical works by Lévi include *Fables et Symboles* ("Stories and Images"), 1862, *Le Sorciere de Meudon* ("The Witch of Meudon") 1865, and *La Science des Esprits* ("The Science of Spirits"), 1865. In 1868, he wrote *Le Grand Arcane, ou l'Occultisme Dévoilé* ("The Great Secret, or Occultism Unveiled"); this, however, was only published posthumously in 1898.

Lévi's version of magic became a great success, especially after his death. That Spiritualism was popular on both sides of the Atlantic from the 1850s contributed to this success. His magical teachings were free from obvious fanaticisms, even if they remained rather murky; he had nothing to sell, and did not pretend to be the initiate of some ancient or fictitious secret society. He incorporated the Tarot cards into his magical system, and as a result the Tarot has been an important part of the paraphernalia of Western magicians. He had a deep impact on the magic of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and later on the ex-Golden Dawn member Aleister Crowley. He was also the first to declare that a pentagram or five-pointed star with one point down and two points up represents evil, while a pentagram with one point up and two points down represents good. It was largely through the occultists inspired by him that Lévi is remembered as one of the key founders of the 20th century revival of magic.

Definition of Magic

Levi's works are filled with various definitions for "Magic" and the "Magician":

Magic

- "To practice magic is to be a quack; to know magic is to be a sage."-from *The Threshold of Magical Science*
- "Magic is the divinity of man achieved in union with faith..."-TMS

Magician

- "He looks on the wicked as invalids whom one must pity and cure; the world, with its errors and vices, is to him God's hospital, and he wishes to serve in it."-KoM
- "They are without fears and without desires, dominated by no falsehood, sharing no error, loving without illusion, suffering without impatience, reposing in the quietude of eternal thought..... a Magus cannot be ignorant, for magic implies superiority, mastership, majority, and majority signifies emancipation by knowledge. The Magus welcomes pleasure, accepts wealth, deserves honour, but is never the slave of one of them; he knows how to be poor, to abstain, and to suffer; he endures oblivion willingly because he is lord of his own happiness, and expects or fears nothing from the caprice of fortune. He can love without being beloved; he can create imperishable treasures, and exalt himself above the level of honours or the prizes of the lottery. He possesses that which he seeks, namely, profound peace. He regrets nothing which must end, but remembers with satisfaction that he has met with good in all. His hope is a certitude, for he knows that good is eternal and evil transitory. He enjoys solitude, but does not fly the society of man; he is a child with children, joyous with the young, staid with the old, patient with the foolish, happy with the wise. He smiles with all who smile, and mourns with all who weep; applauding strength, he is yet indulgent to weakness; offending no one, he has himself no need to pardon, for he never thinks himself offended; he pities those who misconceive him, and seeks an opportunity to serve them; by the force of kindness only does he avenge himself on the ungrateful..."-TMS
- "Judge not; speak hardly at all; love and act."-KoM

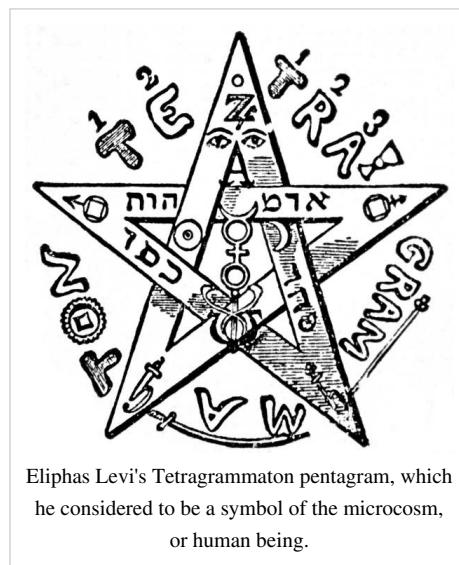
Theory of magic

Levi identified three fundamental principles of magic:^[3]

1. That the material universe is only a small part of total reality, which includes many other planes and modes of consciousness. Full knowledge and full power in the universe are only attainable through awareness of these other aspects of reality. One of the most important of these levels or aspects of reality is the "astral light", a cosmic fluid which may be molded by will into physical forms.
 - "One can only define the unknown by its supposed and supposable relations with the known."-from *The Key of the Mysteries*
 - "The divine ideal of the ancient world made the civilization which came to an end, and one must not despair of seeing the god of our barbarous fathers become the devil of our more enlightened children."-KoM
2. That human willpower is a real force, capable of achieving absolutely anything, from the mundane to the miraculous.
 - AXIOM 1:"Nothing can resist the will of man when he knows what is true and wills what is good."
 - AXIOM 9:"The will of a just man is the Will of God Himself and the Law of Nature."
 - AXIOM 20:"A chain of iron is less difficult to break than a chain of flowers."
 - AXIOM 21:"Succeed in not fearing the lion, and the lion will fear YOU. Say to suffering, 'I will that you shall become a pleasure,' and it will prove to be such-- and even more than a pleasure, it will be a blessing."
3. That the human being is a microcosm, a miniature of the macrocosmic universe, and the two are fundamentally linked. Causes set in motion on one level may equally have effects on another.
 - "Man is the God of the world, and God is the man of Heaven."-KoM

Bibliography

- *Des Mœurs et des Doctrines du Rationalisme en France* (*Of the Moral Customs and Doctrines of Rationalism in France*), 1839
- *La Mère de Dieu* (*The Mother of God*), 1844
- *L'Evangile du Peuple* (*The Gospel of the People*) 1840
- *Le Testament de la Liberté* (*The Testament of Liberty*), 1848
- *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, (*Transcendental Magic, its Doctrine and Ritual*), 1855
- *Histoire de la Magie*, (*The History of Magic*), 1860
- *La Clef des Grands Mystères* (*The Key to the Great Mysteries*), 1861
- *Fables et Symboles* (*Stories and Images*), 1862
- *La Science des Esprits* (*The Science of Spirits*), 1865
- *Le Grand Arcane, ou l'Occultisme Dévoilé* (*The Great Secret, or Occultism Unveiled*), 1868
- *Magical Rituals of the Sanctum Regnum*, 1892, 1970
- *The Book of Splendours: The Inner Mysteries of Qabalism*



Eliphas Levi's Tetragrammaton pentagram, which he considered to be a symbol of the microcosm, or human being.

Notes and references

- [1] Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival*, 1972.
- [2] C. Nelson Stewart, *Bulwer Lytton as Occultist* 1996:36 notes that the one surviving letter from Lévi to Lytton "would appear to be addressed to a stranger or to a very distant acquaintance" (A.E. Waite).
- [3] Ellwood, Robert S. (1993). *Islands of the Dawn*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. ISBN 0-8248-1487-8.
- H.P.Lovecraft referred to Levi several times in his novela *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

External links

- books by Levi (<http://www.occult-underground.com/levi.html>"Online)
- books by Levi (in French) (http://www.theheartcreatestheone.com/library/10_Livres_par_Eliphas_Levi.pdf"10)
- *The Doctrine of Transcendental Magic* (http://altreligion.about.com/library/texts/bl_transcendental.htm) (HTML)
- *The Key to the Great Mysteries* (<http://www.webcitation.org/query?url=http://www.geocities.com/cranesco/keymys/46con.html&date=2009-10-25+17:55:40>)
- How to Attract your Desires by Eliphas Levi (1854) (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/24362696>)
- *Extensive biography in French* (<http://www.la-rose-bleue.org/Biographies/Levi.html>)
- Levi, Eliphas. *Clefs Majeurs et Clavicules de Salomon* ([http://www.tarot.org.il/Library/Levi/Clavicules de Salomon.pdf](http://www.tarot.org.il/Library/Levi/Clavicules%20de%20Salomon.pdf)) ("Major Arcana and Keys of Solomon") - text online. Retrieved 19 October 2006
- Works by Éliphas Lévi (http://www.gutenberg.org/author/Éliphas_Lévi) at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about Éliphas Lévi (<http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n50-32513>) in libraries (WorldCat catalog)

Article Sources and Contributors

Eliphas Levi *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=523365730> *Contributors:* Adrian.benko, Alex earlier account, AlexR, Amadeus webern, AnonMoos, Anonymous from the 21st century, Arch dude, Bender235, Bookworm857158367, Bpfurtado, Capsicum Sulfide, Catherineyronwode, Chzz, Danielsteinbock, Dennis Brown, Diderot, Dominic, Europe22, Frater5, Fuzzypeg, Gabbe, Gary D, Go7776-2500, House of Shin, Ian.thomson, Ihcoyc, IleanaCosanziana, Inbar Arie, Inductiveload, Iriath Zhul, Jan olieslagers, Jossi, Leszek Jaficzuk, Lightbringer (usurped - blocked), LilHelpa, Lucyintheskywithdada, Lung salad, Ma'ame Michu, MakeRocketGoNow, Manytexts, Matthew Fennell, Midnightblueowl, Mirv, Misa666, Mmxx, Mogism, Monegasque, Morbid Fairy, Morgan Leigh, Mygotta, Nagelfar, New Babylon, Optim, Papouche, Podzemnik, Rjwilmsi, Sanjin Vukojevic, Ser Amantio di Nicolao, Smiloid, Stevejacobson, Synergy, Tdevries, Trigaranus, Tsuzuki26, WOSlinker, Wednesday Next, Wetman, Woohookitty, Wutsje, Xn4, 73 anonymous edits

Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

File:Eliphas levi.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Eliphas_levi.jpg *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Andrew c, Deadstar, FSII, Man vyi, Manuel Anastácio

File:Baphomet.png *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Baphomet.png> *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Auréola, Axon, Campani, KAMiKAZOW, Kersti Nebelsiek, Mattes, Mu, Quadell, Simonxag, 1 anonymous edits

Image:Pentagram (Levi).jpg *Source:* [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Pentagram_\(Levi\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Pentagram_(Levi).jpg) *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Eliphas Levi

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
[//creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)